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MOHAMMEDAN AND CHRISTIAN SANCTUARIES

After a final effort, producing eight inches of snow on February 24, and three inches of hail March 4, the winter has gradually given way to spring. Not being willing to lose time, however, we decided not to wait for the definite cessation of the rains to being our trips through the country, but to set out March 14. During the previous month we had made a number of shorter excursions within a radius of ten miles from Jerusalem. In these minor journeys the prime object was to visit the holy sites and shrines of the region in the environs of Jerusalem. Nearly all the Muslim and many of the Christian sanctuaries were examined, and the natives questioned regarding their customs and usages in connection with the cult of prophets (inbiya-anbiyâ') and holy men (ûliya-aulyâ'). Incidentally, the persistence of some very ancient rites and legends was established, and much folkloristic material of other sorts was gathered. The results of the investigation of wells and sacred places will be published by Professor McCown; it is the first elaborate and systematic treatment of the subject, following on the lines laid down by Professor Samuel Ives Curtis, whose pioneer work in this field placed American scholars under an obligation to continue the studies begun by their illustrious compatriot.

IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING PALESTINIAN FOLKLORE AT ONCE

Owing to the unprecedented rapidity of the economic and social evolution of Palestine today, where all races vie with one another in modernizing culture and beliefs, the thorough study of the folklore of Palestine is a matter of imperative necessity. Every year interesting and significant details pass into oblivion, and it is rare indeed to find a young peasant who knows much; in one village we were told, "The old men think so and so, but we boys don't think so." The importance of these studies for understanding the mind of the Palestinian peasant, in many respects no doubt like his Israelite and Canaanite predecessors, can hardly be overestimated. The interest of these researches for comparative religions may be illustrated by two facts: in Bethlehem, which, according to Epiphanius, was a center of Adonis worship in the Roman period, Adonis gardens are still prepared by some of the women, and set on the table for good luck every Easter; in Jôra, a village just off the site of ancient Ashkelon, the vernal procession of the goddess Atargatis from her temple to the sea, where her statue received a bath, still survives in a slightly modified form. We are on the track of much interesting material in various branches of the field of folklore, especially in village legendary cycles and Bedu law, which is still administered by the mukhtars of Judaea, as well as by the sheikhs of the Negeb. The Director is now coöperating in these researches with a number of Syrian folklorists, especially four, Dr. Tewfik Canaan, Mr. Elias N. Haddad, Hanna Stephan, and Omar Effendi Barghuti, a young Muslim scholar of extraordinary promise and ability. He is also projecting, with Mr. E. N. Haddad, a new grammar and conversation book of Palestinian Arabic, in the international phonetic alphabet, as employed by Canon Gairdner for Egyptian Arabic.

A TRIP ON THE DEAD SEA

March 14-18 we joined a party from Jerusalem and Ramallah, hired a motor boat, and traveled the length of the Dead Sea and back.